

A Sign that Golf is Good for the Environment

Using interpretive signs on the golf course.

BY PATRICK J. GROSS

Stop. Caution. Exit. We encounter many different kinds of signs on the highway and in our communities every day. How about a sign that says, "Golf is Good for the Environment"? Why not?

Superintendents have made great strides in the past ten years with projects to protect and enhance wildlife habitat on golf courses. While the results have been fantastic, golfers may not be aware of the effort being made. Most are so focused on hitting their next shot that they don't always look up and enjoy the scenery. But don't let that stop you from getting your message across. You simply have to look for opportunities during a round of golf to expose golfers to the environmental projects and wildlife habitat at your course. An excellent way to do this is by placing interpretive signs in key locations on the golf course. Three courses in California provide excellent examples of what can be done.

CRYSTAL SPRINGS GOLF COURSE

Located in Burlingame, California, Crystal Springs Golf Course occupies a very important stretch of land that forms part of the buffer zone along Crystal Springs Reservoir. This is one of the few undeveloped portions of the San Francisco peninsula, and there is an abundance of wildlife. Ray Davies, CGCS, worked with environmental specialist Jim Mocci to identify and implement habitat enhancement projects, including nest boxes, brush piles for rodents, and erecting raptor perches for hawks that inhabit the area; then they placed signs on the course to

let golfers know about the projects. The signs were professionally made at a local sign shop, using weatherproof materials for about \$500 each. Most of the interpretive signs are near tees, allowing golfers to read about Crystal Springs' habitat enhancement efforts while waiting to tee off.

PASATIEMPO GOLF CLUB

Pasatiempo Golf Club is a member of the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses, and one of their outreach activities was to install Audubon bulletin boards on the course. Information is posted about birds that inhabit the golf course as well as other seasonal wildlife activity. Members of Pasatiempo's Audubon Resource Committee donated the materials and built the attractive cabinets that were installed next to No. 5 tee and No. 13 tee. Superintendent Dean Gump and landscape supervisor Francine Moody work together throughout the year to develop laminated information signs that are posted in the cabinets and rotated each season. The signs are well received by visitors and regular golfers alike.

PGA OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA GOLF CLUB AT OAK VALLEY

The PGA of Southern California built two new courses west of Palm Springs that were opened in 2000. During construction, sections of the course were set aside as habitat for the California gnatcatcher, an endangered species. Paul Mayes, CGCS, and his staff implemented many other projects during and after construction of the course, including preserving wildlife corridors, installing



Pointing out areas of the course with unique wildlife activity adds interest and enjoyment to the game for golfers of all ages.

nest boxes, and protecting native vegetation in out-of-play areas. During construction, interpretive signs inform guests of the unique environmental conditions and wildlife activity on the site. The signs are placed near tees in sections of the course where the wildlife activity is most prominent. The engraved rock signs match the style of the tee monuments and other accessories on the golf course. The signs are a nice way to get golfers to take a brief break from the game to enjoy and appreciate their surroundings.

Each of these courses has benefited in many ways by installing interpretive signs:

- The signs provide an excellent educational opportunity for golfers and the maintenance staff.
- They increase awareness of wildlife on the golf course.
- Golfers get a sense of satisfaction when they can identify a bird, tree, or flower, and it adds to a greater appreciation of the course.
- The signs demonstrate a commitment to environmental quality and habitat preservation.

Installing interpretive signs is one of many ways to let golfers know about your efforts to enhance wildlife habitat and spread the message that golf is good for the environment.

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